

State of Connecticut

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STATE CAPITOL

REPRESENTATIVE GAIL LAVIELLE
ONE HUNDRED FORTY-THIRD ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING, ROOM 4200
300 CAPITOL AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06106-1591

CAPITOL: (860) 240-8700
TOLL FREE: (800) 842-1423
Gail.Lavielle@housegop.ct.gov

RANKING MEMBER
COMMERCE COMMITTEE

MEMBER
APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE
EDUCATION COMMITTEE
HIGHER EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT
ADVANCEMENT COMMITTEE

February 10, 2014

James Redeker, Commissioner
Department of Transportation
P.O. Box 317546
2800 Berlin Turnpike
Newington, CT 06111

Dear Commissioner Redeker,

I write to let you know about the increasing number of complaints I am receiving from people in my area about morning rail service on the Danbury Branch Line, and to ask your help in resolving these issues.

As you know, following the recent schedule changes, the first weekday train from Danbury to Grand Central is no longer a through train. Passengers traveling on the Danbury Line must now change in South Norwalk to continue toward New York. Many people are inconvenienced by this change. Those who can are now taking the subsequent train, but a substantial number of people cannot.

While the transfer to another train in itself is inconvenient, the escalating problems with Metro-North's service have made it a veritable ordeal for commuters. Among the problems they have cited:

- When the Danbury Line train reaches South Norwalk, it slows down considerably, causing delays. When it arrives, only one door opens, and passengers must wait in line to exit. Then they must walk a considerable distance, sometimes in adverse weather conditions, to get to their connecting train.
- Several times, when they arrived in South Norwalk, the connecting train had already left, and they had to wait for the next train.

- The persistent malfunctioning of the signals on the Danbury Line has caused delays of up to 30 minutes on this train (as well as the other trains). Compounded with the problems related to the transfer, these delays have made the morning ride an extremely difficult experience for commuters. Several commuters have noted that the delays on the Danbury Line have caused their commute to Grand Central to last for three hours.
- Very often, when the train is late, no announcements are made, and commuters cannot gauge how late they will be for work or if they might miss their Norwalk connection. Passengers on other trains have also complained about a lack of communication.

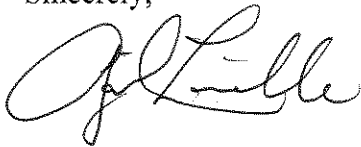
The most distressing e-mails that I receive come from constituents whose employers have told them that their repeated late arrivals at work may cost them their jobs. This is not acceptable, and I am very concerned on their behalf.

The commuters who ride the 5:36 am train from Danbury would like to see through service restored. If that is not possible, certainly they would like to see the service problems addressed urgently so that they can at least count on a predictable connection for their trip to work.

If Metro-North is currently in such disarray that the operational problems cannot be addressed now, then I respectfully request that you consider at least restoring the through-train service until the operational problems can be resolved.

Thank you very much, Commissioner, as always, for your prompt attention to this disturbing situation. I look forward to hearing your thoughts.

Sincerely,



Gail Lavielle
State Representative, 143rd District

Cc: Thomas Pendergast MTA Chairman
Representative Antonio Guerrero
Senator Andrew Maynard
Representative David Scribner
Senator Toni Boucher
Representative Tom O'Dea
Representative John Shaban
Representative Dan Carter
Representative John Frey